



Youth Inclusion Workshop Guide: Activity Planning 101

Workshop Description: This workshop includes guidelines and practice for developing the fundamental skills for planning program activities that support positive youth development. As staff, understanding how to plan, expand, and tailor a program to all youth and their interests will not only increase participation, but also lead to a greater sense of confidence and belonging among youth.

In this workshop, staff will develop and put to practice the skills required to brainstorm and plan possible activities for youth in the program. The activity plans developed will teach staff not only how to plan and interact with youth, but also how to do so in a way that is inclusive for all.

Preparation Time: The preparation time for this workshop is approximately 15 to 20 minutes. This preparation time should include reading background information on the Youth Inclusion Training website and in this workshop guide, collecting materials, and gathering any additional information you may need.

Instruction Time: It will take approximately 45 to 50 minutes to complete all activities within this guide.

Materials:

- Printed copies of the *Activity Planning Web* worksheet.
- Two large poster sized pieces of paper.
- Writing utensils.
- Two large blank white sheets of paper or a whiteboard.

Preparation Instructions: You should read the content related to this topic on the Youth Inclusion Training website, specifically the content related to Program Structure. In addition, gather all necessary materials and familiarize yourself with the workshop guide. It may also be helpful to familiarize yourself with the *Webbing Planning* activity themes as well as possible activities that correlate with each theme as there is no facilitator key.

Knowledge: Activity Planning 101

Quality programs are intentionally structured to incorporate positive youth development through peer relationships, cooperation between youth, involving youth on multiple levels, and creating various opportunities for youth. These principles are at the core of good activity planning and allow program staff to create an inclusive environment supportive of all youth.

Here is what these strategies in action look like:

Appropriate Structure. Clear, consistent, and age-appropriate activities and expectations for roles within the activities will ensure activities run smoothly.

Opportunities to Belong. Create an inclusive, engaging environment for all. It is typical for cliques and groups to form when youth are participating in activities, which may lead some youth to feel unwelcome. It is staff's role to ensure that the activities they are planning and facilitating do not isolate youth but emphasize the need for collaboration among peers.



Engagement. Program staff can engage youth by being flexible around the types of activities presented to youth and the different roles youth may want to take within the activity. Youth will have a variety of different interests and expectations, so programming should never be one size fits all. Therefore, allowing youth to take on different roles or participate in a couple different activities leads to increased participation. When youth are excited to participate in a program, greater youth development often occurs.

Objectives:

- Understand how to prepare activities on various subjects and areas of interest.
- Understand how to tailor program activities to be inclusive to all youth.

Introduction (5 minutes):

- Outline the topic of activity planning for youth programs by emphasizing how valuable activity planning is for creating a sense of belonging and excitement in youth, ultimately leading to greater youth development.
 - What to say: “Today we are going to discuss how to plan activities for the youth in our program. You will be able to practice creating an activity plan while focusing on how to include the needs and interests of all youth.”
- Transition into Prior Knowledge Activity:
 - What to say: “First we are going to start off with the knowledge you already have regarding planning activities.”

Prior Knowledge (5-7 minutes):

- Start by asking the staff what are some popular activities among youth and what is it about those activities that makes them popular.
- Ask the staff what they would do if they saw a youth looking disinterested, lost, or left out during one of the program’s activities.
- Ask the staff what they think are important aspects to keep in mind when planning an activity. What should be included? For example, planning may include alternative roles or tasks for youth who don’t want to participate or how to create groups that are inclusive. Record their responses on a large sheet of poster paper.
- Ask the staff if there is anything they don’t know or feel they want to know more about in regards to how to plan a successful activity. Again, record their responses.

Activities:

Activity: *Webbing Activity Planning* (30 minutes)

- Describe the *Webbing Activity Planning* activity:
 - What to say: “The worksheet you will receive is an example of a tool that can be used for planning and outlining activities, potential guest speakers, field trips, etc. surrounding a focus topic. This tool and others like it may be useful when trying to understand what types of activities can help a program and its youth prosper.”
- Lead the *Webbing Activity Planning* activity:
 - Distribute the *Activity Planning Web* worksheet to each staff member.



- Explain to the staff that the activities, guest speakers, and field trips surrounding the central theme all correlate with that theme and support whatever it is the theme is trying to teach or expose youth to.
- Brainstorm or write a list of several possible themes that activity planning can be centered around. Some examples include the following:
 - Farm Day
 - Earth Day and Environmental Awareness
 - Gardening
 - Art and Music
 - “Meet the Bank” - Learning about money management (for older youth)
 - Staying Active
 - Energy Conservation Tips and Practices
 - Healthy Eating
 - Learning About Wildlife
 - Survival Strategies 101
- Have staff form groups of two to three individuals and have each group choose a central theme listed above.
- Using “Understanding Government” as the central theme, provide an example of how to use the worksheet by saying that possible activities include watching School House Rock Government videos or writing letters to your congressman. A possible field trip would be to visit your local government building, precinct, capitol, etc. Finally, possible guest speakers would be local government officials, mayors, lawyers, judges, police officers, council members, etc.
- In their small groups, have the staff fill out their *Activity Planning Web* worksheets, including possible activities, field trips, and speakers that would engage and teach youth about their specific theme. Try to fill out most of the web for each theme. Some themes may be more difficult than others.
- Once all groups are finished with their activity planning, ask for a few volunteers to share what they came up with.

Activity: Promoting Inclusive Activities (30 minutes)

- Describe the *Promoting Inclusive Activities* activity:
 - What to say: “Some of the themes and activities you planned may be more appealing to some youth and not at all to others. Therefore, the next activity will focus on how to expand participation to include the interests of all youth.”
- Lead the *Promoting Inclusive Activities* activity:
 - Have the small groups return to the activity webs they created. Within each of their webs, have them identify possible ways youth may not feel included or where cliques could form. For example, some boys may not feel interested in any of the Healthy Eating activities or field trips.
 - After addressing areas where some youth may not feel interested or included, brainstorm possible solutions to the issue. One possible solution for the Healthy Eating issue is that program staff offer alternative activities for skills that young boys may resonate with more like building campfires and grilling food, an activity young boys may



have observed older male role models in their lives enjoying and which relates back to the Healthy Eating theme.

- Ask if there are any volunteers who would like to share what they came up with as solutions for increasing inclusivity.

Reflection and Recap (5 minutes):

- Return to the staff's responses gathered at the start of the workshop (see Prior Knowledge activity). Ask the staff what they learned during the course of the workshop and record the information on the same paper or a new blank page if there is no room. Draw attention to topics that were on the list generated earlier, new topics, and questions that were answered.
- Ask follow-up questions, such as "What part of the activity made you realize that?"

Resources:

Worksheet: *Activity Planning Web*

Sources:

The *Webbing Activity Planning* was adapted from the following reference: *U.S. Army child and youth services youth technology lab operations reference book*, Version 1.0. Materials developed and adapted by: Otto, M., Mitchell, G., Duer, R., Morton, S., Greenberg, R., Podolec, R., ... & Zuhars, C.



Youth Inclusion Worksheet: Activity Planning Web

Directions: Choose a theme and fill out the Activity Planning Web according to the theme.

